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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

August 22, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Sally Vaughn, Ph.D. *Sally*
Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer

SUBJECT: Release of 2011 Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools List and Top-to-Bottom School Ranking List

In July 2011, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) submitted a request for a waiver of certain requirements for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grants to the U.S. Department of Education (USED). We recently received notification that one of our waiver requests has been denied.

This waiver would have permitted the MDE to use rules different from those required by Section 1003g for identifying schools as persistently low achieving (PLA). MDE's preferred rules use a straight classification of the lowest performing five percent of schools as determined by Michigan standard assessments (Michigan Educational Assessment Program, Michigan Merit Exam, and MI-Access), growth data, achievement gap data in all five tested content areas, and graduation rate data (for high schools) without using the USED "tier" system.

Because the waiver was denied by USED, Michigan's 2011 PLA list will be determined by current federal guidelines, which require the use of the tier system and do not include graduation rate data, achievement gap data, and assessment data for content areas other than reading and mathematics.

We are disappointed in the denial of this waiver request, however, when the USED announces later this fall its criteria for future waiver requests, we intend to re-submit the PLA rule waiver along with others.

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We appreciate the work of many Michigan educators over this past year in helping MDE develop improved rules for identifying struggling schools. Even though we will have to comply with current USED guidelines to develop the 2011 PLA list, MDE will publish a statewide "Top to Bottom" School Ranking list using the rules developed by MDE and our education stakeholders.

We will release both the PLA list and the Top-to-Bottom School Ranking list by September 1, as required by federal guidelines and state law. Districts with schools on either the 2010 or 2011 PLA list should anticipate communication from MDE during the week of August 22, 2011 concerning next steps.

For more information about the PLA list and Top to Bottom School Ranking list, please visit http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_57510---,00.html.

Questions concerning the lists should be directed to mde-accountability@michigan.gov.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance